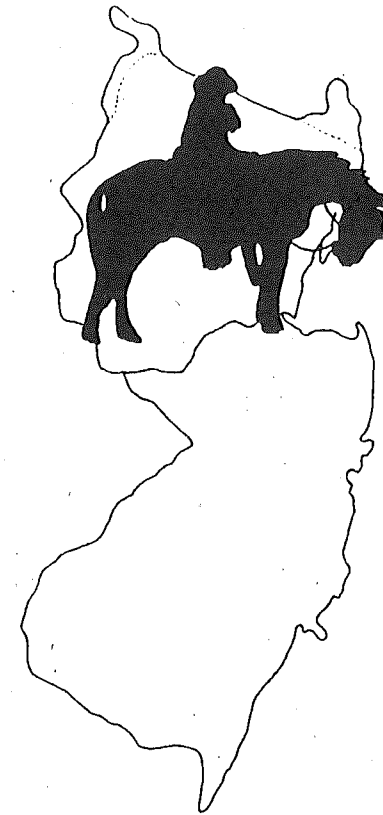




THE CIRCUIT WRITER

Historical Society
Northern New Jersey Conference
The United Methodist Church



Barbara Brooks Tomblin
Editor

Publication
of the
Historical and Archival Society
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2000

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AN INTRODUCTION

This year 2000 issue of the *Circuit Writer*, our first of the new century, is likely the final annual publication of the Historical and Archival Society of Northern New Jersey. With the unification of the northern and southern New Jersey annual conferences into one conference this summer, the Trustees of our society look forward to becoming part of a United Historical and Archival Society of New Jersey. In the future our joint annual publication will be published as the *Historical Trail* with the *Circuit Writer* continuing as the name of our newsletter.

For this our final issue we have selected two articles lifting up important early historic sites in our Northern New Jersey Annual Conference, both of them stone buildings dating back to the early years of Methodism in our area.

H. Alden Welch reminds us in his article "The Newton Rectory and Francis Asbury" that one of our least known, but more historic sites, is a nine room stone house in Newton which hosted Francis Asbury on his first visit to our area in 1784. Then the rectory to Christ Church in Newton, this house was not included among the photographs of six sites visited by Asbury in Vernon Hampton's *Newark Conference Centennial History*, an oversight we are delighted to be able to rectify in our publication this year.

Although not in the state of New Jersey, but still within the bounds of our annual conference, is the Old Stone Church in Upper Nyack, New York. Completed in 1813, the church was called the First Methodist Church of Nyack but a growing Methodist congregation replaced it another structure in 1844. The non-denominational years of the Old Stone Church in the 1930's and 40's are remembered by a member of the church, Robert Buckhout, in a speech delivered on the occasion of the placing of the Old Stone Church on the National Register of Historic Sites on May 9, 1999.

And finally, in this our last issue we thought it appropriate to include a short, illustrated, history of the Northern New Jersey Annual Conference written by our own Society president Dr. William Noll.

Barbara B. Tomblin, Ph.D.
Editor

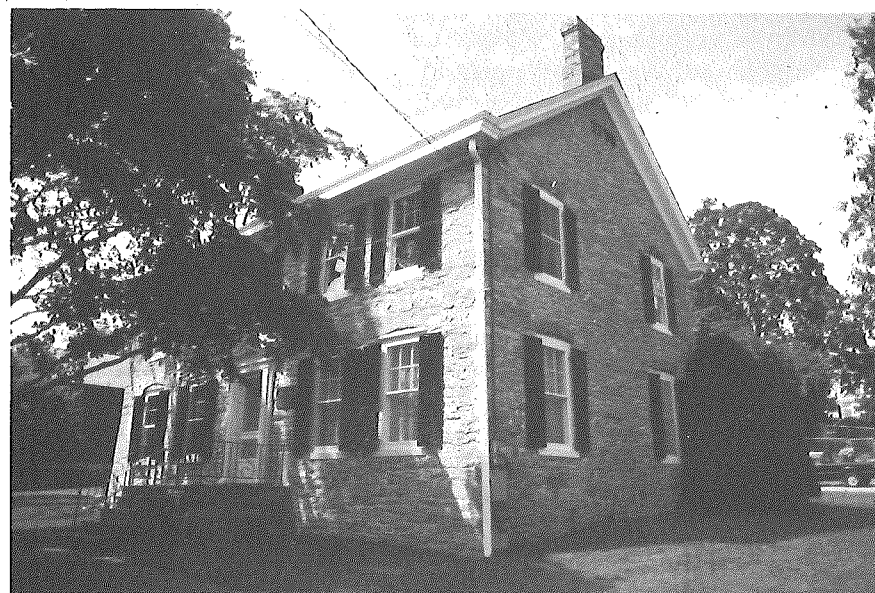
THE NEWTON RECTORY AND FRANCIS ASBURY

H. Alden Welch

"I rode to Mr. Ogden's. Next day I spoke, but with little freedom, to an attentive yet unfeeling audience. In Sussex court-house. My host, who appears to be a man of liberal sentiments, entertained me kindly."

—Francis Asbury—journal entry for Tuesday, August 24, 1784.

The house where Asbury stayed the first time he came to Sussex County still stands. The rectory of Christ Church in 1784, it is now owned and occupied by Mr. Charles Tice, a prominent citizen of Sussex County and an active United Methodist. Built in 1770 of native stone, the nine-room house is remarkably well-preserved. Located on Dunn Place just off 206, it is the oldest building in Newton, a historic landmark. The exterior has been restored to its original look. Many of the interior rooms maintain their colonial style and character. A framed copy of Asbury's journal entry hangs in the entrance hallway commemorating its place in Methodist history.



Old Newton Rectory - 1770 owned by C. Tice
Asbury stayed here August 24, 1784

Asbury made the long journey to Sussex County not only to preach but also to meet the Rev. Uzal Ogden, Jr., the rector of Christ Church. For over

a year, they had been corresponding by letter. Asbury sensed a kindred soul.

Ogden was 26 years old in 1770 when he was asked by Dr. Thomas Chambers, rector of St. John's Church in Elizabeth, to go as the missionary-in-charge to a new parish in the wilds of northwest New Jersey. Chambers had visited the area the previous November and learned that there were 50 Church of England families spread across what is now Warren and Sussex Counties who needed shepherding. Jonathan Hampton, a vestryman of St. John's who in 1760 had bought 2,300 acres and laid out a village he called "New Town," donated 10 acres for a rectory near the town square. The proprietors of East Jersey granted the new parish 200 acres as a glebe or income-producing property to generate operating funds. The Society for Propagation of the Gospel authorized a small stipend. The local vestry agreed to provide a house.

Although based in Newton, Ogden was responsible for ministering to souls in a nearly 2,000 square mile area. He, like Asbury, spent most of his time on horseback. Services were held in the Sussex court-house on the third Sunday of each month. The rest of the time he traveled to Knowlton, Roxbury, Hackettstown, and other settlements. In 1773, he went to London to be ordained so he could administer the sacraments.

With the beginning of the American Revolution, Ogden, who favored the patriot cause, found his services in greater demand over a wider area because many Anglican clergy had fled to Canada or returned to England. His itineration now encompassed Morristown and Newark, as well as parts of eastern Pennsylvania. Legend has it that both sheep and ammunition were stored in the cellar of the rectory for Washington's army.

In 1784, Ogden was asked to become the assistant rector of Trinity Church in New York City, and he accepted, but he continued to be listed as the rector of Christ Church until 1792 and from time to time returned to Newton. He might have become the first Episcopal bishop of New Jersey. He was elected by the diocesan convention in 1798, but the General Convention refused to confirm him. The reason given in Merritt Ierley's history of Christ Church was his "Methodistical" leanings. He eventually left the Episcopal Church and became a Presbyterian.

Asbury returned in 1799 and 1803. Other Methodist preachers may have come through as well. His fourth visit in 1811 finally bore fruit. May 15—"I preached at Sussex court-house, and felt as if my labour was not in vain; the minds of the people were open for the reception of the truth." He was right. A Sussex Circuit was formed that year and two small groups began meeting in Newton area homes. In 1831, a church was incorporated.

It was at a conference in Bristol, England that Francis Asbury had responded to John Wesley's request for preachers willing to go to America. It was from Bristol in the fall of 1771 that he and Richard Wright set sail. In recognition of Asbury's role in bringing Methodism to Sussex County, the

United Methodist Homes of New Jersey chose to name its new Continuing Care Retirement Community in Newton - "Bristol Glen."

Writer's Note: Helpful in preparing this article along with Hampton's *Newark Conference Centennial History* and other readily available sources were: *An Inheritance of The Faithful: A 225th Anniversary History of Christ Episcopal Church* by Merritt Ierley, 1993; and 'One Hundred Fifty Years of Newton Methodist' by Warren D. Cummings included in the *150th Anniversary History and Directory of First United Methodist Church*, 1981.

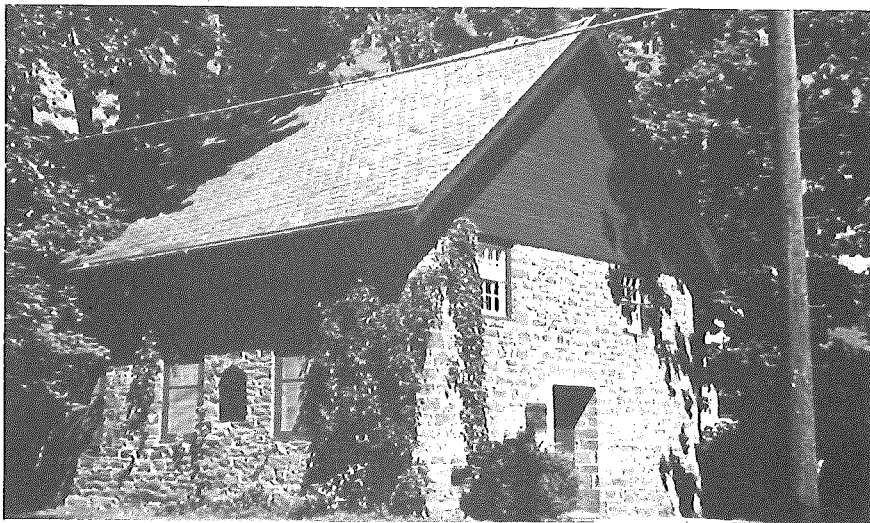
**EVENT: PLACING OF OLD STONE CHURCH,
UPPER NYACK, NEW YORK
ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

MAY 6, 1999

*Text of speech below written and delivered at Old Stone Church by
Robert "Bob" Buckhout*

Bob was born and grew up just three blocks from the Church at his parents' home on Van Houten Street. He attended Sunday School at the Church in the late '30s and early '40s. He was an active participant in the High School Youth Group in the '40s and early '50s. From 1955-1985 he served in various officer positions in the Church.

He will now give us the history of the non-denominational years as he remembers it.



The Old Stone Church

We have heard thus far the older history of this Historic Church. Now I will give you a glimpse of the Non-Denominational years, at least from the late '30s to the mid-'80s. To some it will be history, to some of us like myself, it will be nostalgia, as well.

My earliest recollection of Old Stone Church was in the late '30s when my mother made my two brothers and I get all dressed up and walk the three blocks from home every Sunday afternoon to attend Sunday School classes at Old Stone. My first memory of a pastor, was Jake Duty ('37-'41).

Perhaps I remember him, because as a very young lad who loved baseball, the place to be was at Nyack Memorial Park for a weekday twilight Nyack Softball League game and watch my dad pitch. The star pitcher of the league was fastball pitcher Jake Duty, our Pastor, and hundreds came to watch him pitch. He was the "preaching pitcher" from Old Stone.

Willis Braun (Pastor early '40s) created the stained glass work behind me. His wife, Thelma, wrote a song called "The Old Stone Church is my Church" and it was sung by the children at Sunday School for many years.

Jerry Wilson (wife, Marie) pastored here in the mid '40s and daughter Sharon was dedicated here. Sharon's husband, Ed Mangham, is currently Pastor of Simpson Memorial Church in South Nyack, New York.

Joseph E. Nicholson was here in the late '40s to 1950. He was a missionary in Africa for many years.

A program from the late '40s best describes the doctrine of the Non-Denominational Old Stone Church, basically the same as most fundamental churches. Such as belief in the Triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in the Holy Scriptures, the new birth through repentance, the virgin birth and the second coming of Christ.

In the late '40s and early '50s we had a very active High School Youth Group with many activities. Six of us teenage boys used the motto "Goosetown against the World" and formed a basketball team (no uniforms). My brother Roy and myself, along with Frank, Jim and Skippy Ridlon and Ken Hoehn took on and beat several of the big Churches, Grace Episcopal, St. Ann's in Nyack and Grace Baptists of Nanuet. We felt like David beating Goliath.

In winter we would go ice skating on Swartout Lake in Congers. Mrs. Ruth North of the Church would allow us to use her backyard which was on the Lake. Her son Norman participated until 1950 when he joined the Marine Corps. He never returned. He was killed that same year at the beach invasion at Inchon, Korea. It was a blow to all of us.

In 1953, while serving in the U.S. Army in Korea, I received an Old Stone Church special music program of December 13, 1953 dedicating the new organ, which was purchased with the generous donations of not only church members, but of the Upper Nyack Community at large.

"This organ installed in Memory of those in the Community who served in World War II."

"These chimes are in honor of Nellie C. Allen in deep gratitude for her years of faithfulness to the Old Stone Church."

Bud Lewis played the new organ and Donna Lou Hixenbaugh played the piano.

In 1956, we had color postcards printed and many were given to the residents of the Village and various visitors to the Church.

From 1950 through 1962, Reverend Warren Smith was Pastor (wife, Myrtle) and the Church thrived. Our membership grew from 31 in the early fifties to 43 by 1959.

A typical year from the 1959 Annual Report of the Clerk showed we had 14 guest speakers which included 11 missionaries. There were 7 films shown. We took in 6 new members in 1959. Two weddings were held. There were 4 baptisms and 4 babies were dedicated. The Annual Church Picnic was held at Requa Lake. A new Junior/Senior High youth group was formed. There was a Halloween party at the Pastor's house and a Thanksgiving Day Service at the Church. The Annual Christmas Children's Program, as always, was a success.

During these years, besides normal maintenance, we put in the first air-conditioner and a new circuit breaker, pointed the stone outside, added new gutters and put in new carpeting and drapes.

In 1962, we had two setbacks. Pastor Smith suffered a heart attack and was replaced for several months by interim Pastor John Woehr.

On December 13, 1962, Elmer "Bud" Lewis, a faithful officer of the Church and accomplished organist and pianist died suddenly at age 41. He could have played professionally, however loved his full time job as Officer of the American Tract Society of New York and wrote articles for several national religious magazines.

In 1964, Nellie C. Allen passed away. She was the 20th Century Pioneer of the Old Stone Church. From stoking the wood stove to being an inspiration to all who knew her. She lived on Perry Lane, just one block from the Church and opened her home and heart to us often.

Daughter, Daisy Allen, a good friend of the Church and well known as "the Nurse" at Nyack Hospital for many years, donated the flower pedestal in memory of her mother and a Pulpit Bible in memory of Bud Lewis and Nellie Allen. The Church provided the memorial plaque near the piano and the Communion Table.

Despite our losses, during the '60s we ran a Daily Vacation Bible School for one week in August and had an average of 55 neighborhood children daily. Also from 1960-1970 Release Time Classes were legal and an average of 17 students from Upper Nyack School would get religious training once per week for 1 hour at the Church.

In 1963, on the 150th Anniversary of Old Stone Church, we put out a commemorative (1st day cover) stamp with a picture of the Church.

A dispute arose in 1964 over how to replace the wood siding which was deteriorating. Some wanted to use maintenance-free aluminum siding. I led the opposition and said, "put aluminum siding on a historic building, no way." We won and the new wood was installed and painted.

Four Pastors served an average of two years each during 1963-1971, namely John Goodwin, Gerald Morris, Bob Smith and Elvin Patton.

By 1970, the Church was on a downward trend losing several families in the late '60s.

In 1971, Bob Anthony (wife, Lois) became Pastor.

By Christmas 1973, we had added 12 new members and a regeneration occurred for the next 10 years.

In 1975, the flooring, being in bad condition, was replaced with a new floor, properly chord. The pews, piano, organ and furnace had to be removed for three weeks and replaced after completion.

In 1976, the Nyack School District requested and received permission to use the Church for personal counseling of students.

In 1979, after decades of discussion, the Upper Nyack Village Board approved an outside heated bathroom for the Church. Running water at last.

In 1985, a decrease in membership was the beginning of the end for the Non-Denominational Era.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my mother, Katherine, for sending me to this Church at an early age and thank the wonderful members that I served with over these many years.

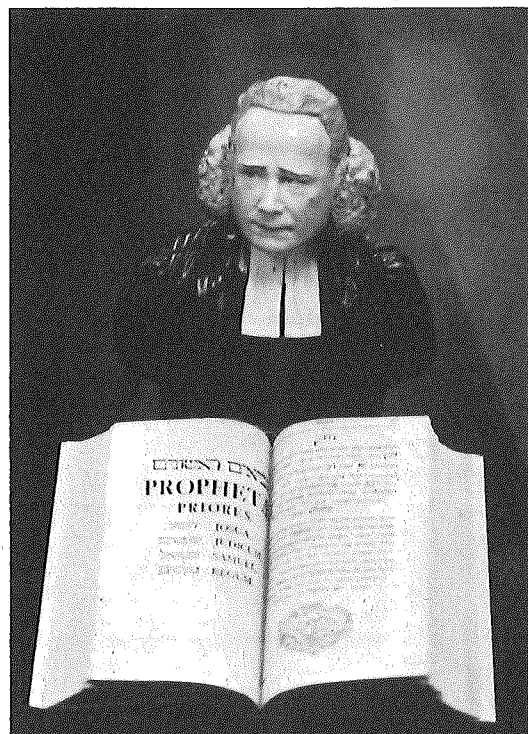
We not only served the community well in a spiritual way, but always were aware of our obligation to keep this wonderful building preserved for history well into the 21st Century.

HISTORY OF THE NORTHERN NEW JERSEY CONFERENCE,

Dr. William T. Noll

The Northern New Jersey Conference covers the northern portion of the state, approximately that part above the Raritan River. It also takes in Rockland County, New York, and churches in the Delaware Valley of New York and Pennsylvania around Port Jervis. Until 1964, the Conference also included Staten Island, New York. In 1997, the Northern New Jersey Conference celebrated its 140th anniversary.

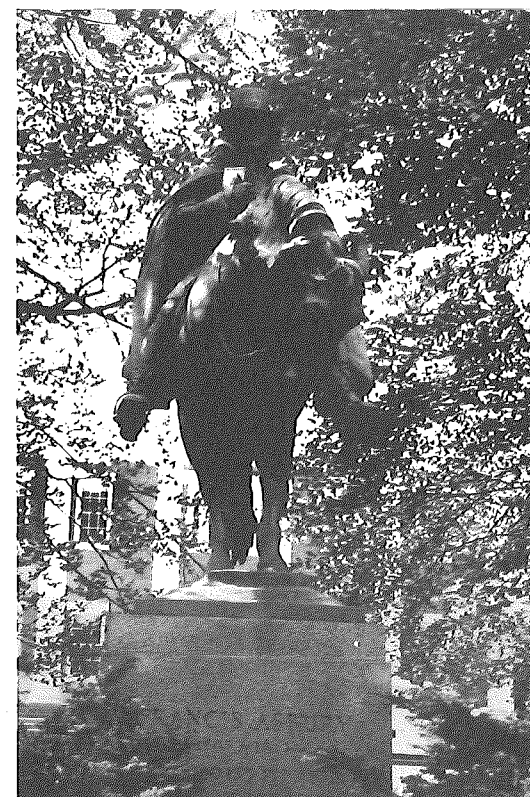
The first "Methodist" to preach in Northern New Jersey was George Whitefield, the world-renowned eighteenth century evangelist who, while not formally associated with the Methodist societies in England, was a close friend and ally of John and Charles Wesley. It was Whitefield who convinced John Wesley of the effectiveness of outdoor preaching. In the mid-eighteenth century, Whitefield conducted a series of preaching missions around the world. In 1739 and 1740, Whitefield preached in Elizabeth,



A bust of John Wesley with the Asbury Bible at the Archives Center at Drew University.

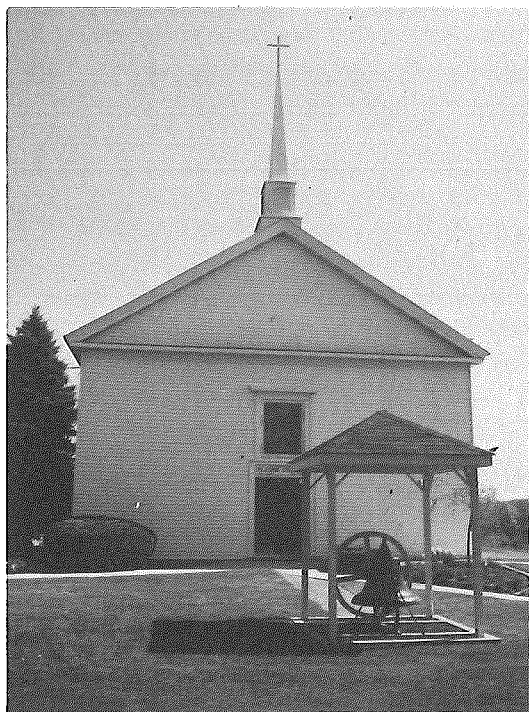
Amwell, Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, Newark, and Basking Ridge. Whitefield was a powerful preacher but not an organizer of churches, and no new congregations were created as a result of his preaching in our area.

The first Methodist congregations in America were organized by laity in Maryland, New York City, and Philadelphia in the late 1760's. By the next decade, John Wesley was sending preachers to America and these preachers worked with committed laity to begin organizing Methodist societies throughout the thirteen colonies prior to the Revolutionary War. New Jersey's location between New York City and Philadelphia insured that Methodist circuit riders would visit the area frequently. The most famous of these early Methodist preachers was Francis Asbury. He and Thomas Coke were the first two bishops of Methodism in America. By studying local church histories and Asbury's *Journals*, Methodist historian Vernon Hampton has counted seventy visits of Francis Asbury to Northern New Jersey, and confirmed thirty four communities within the bounds of our conference whose Methodist churches have roots in Asbury's ministry.

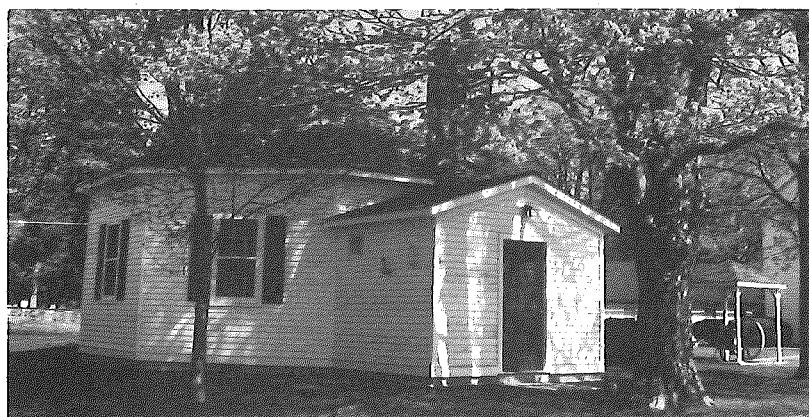


This statue of Bishop Francis Asbury on horseback stands near the entrance of Drew University.

The oldest congregation within our conference, Frankford Plains United Methodist Church, has a history dating back to 1710, when Lutherans in the area organized a congregation and built a log church. By 1787, the congregation had become Methodist, thanks to the preaching and



Frankford Plains is the oldest congregation in the conference, dating to 1710. This conference historic site includes a cemetery dating to the eighteenth century, and a unique nineteenth century octagonal one-room schoolhouse, which has been faithfully restored and is currently used as the church office.



influence of such early circuit riders as Thomas Morrell and Ezekiel Cooper, and by visits from Asbury himself. In addition to its historic cemetery, the Frankford Plains Church owns a unique nineteenth century octagonal schoolhouse on the church grounds.

Another early congregation with ties to Bishop Asbury is the United Methodist Church in Asbury, New Jersey. The leading citizen of Hall's Mills, as Asbury was originally known, was Colonel William McCullough, who had fought in the Revolution with George Washington, and was a prominent legislator and judge. Whenever Bishop Asbury was in the area, McCullough hosted him in his home and held preaching services in his barn. In 1796, when Bishop Asbury came to town to lay the cornerstone for the first Methodist church, McCullough persuaded his neighbors to rename the village in the bishop's honor. Asbury, New Jersey, is the first town in the world named for the pioneer Methodist bishop.



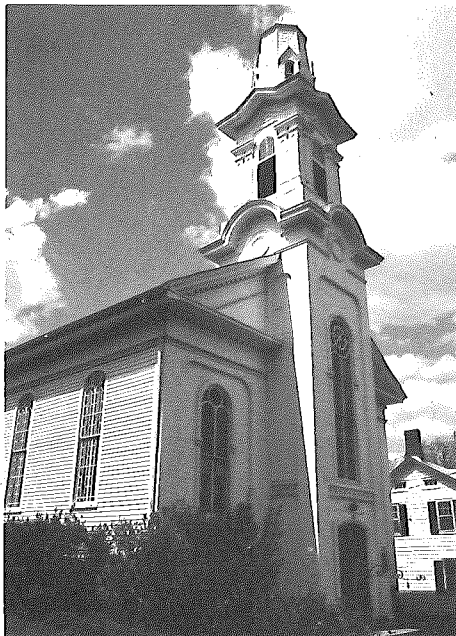
Asbury, New Jersey, was the first community in America named for the pioneering bishop, and the center of an early Methodist circuit. This is the third church building constructed on this site.

Other early centers of Methodist activity in Northern New Jersey prior to the Revolutionary War include Belleville, Oldwick, Kingwood, Perth Amboy and Rahway, as well as Staten Island, New York. A conference church with a unique history is located in Thiells, New York. It was chartered in 1784 by Methodists at City Road Chapel in London, England, as a mission to the Minneceongo Indians.

In the 1780's, the East Jersey Circuit covered an area which approximately encompassed the present day Northern New Jersey Conference. Two circuit riding preachers, assisted by some local preachers and the laity, were responsible for developing and caring for some thirty Methodist

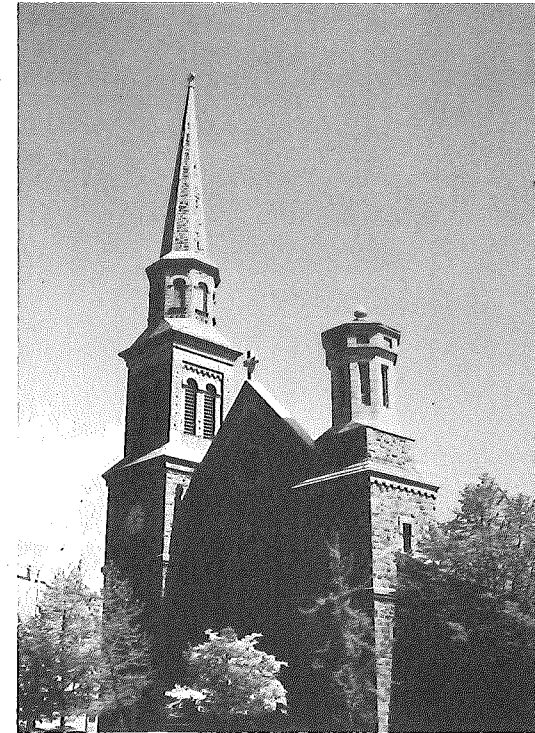


The home of Colonel William McCullough, Revolutionary War soldier, member of the New Jersey legislature, and leading citizen of the village of Hall's Mills. Colonel McCullough, an ardent Methodist, persuaded the residents of his village to rename it in honor of Bishop Asbury. Like the Asbury church, the McCullough House is a conference historic site.



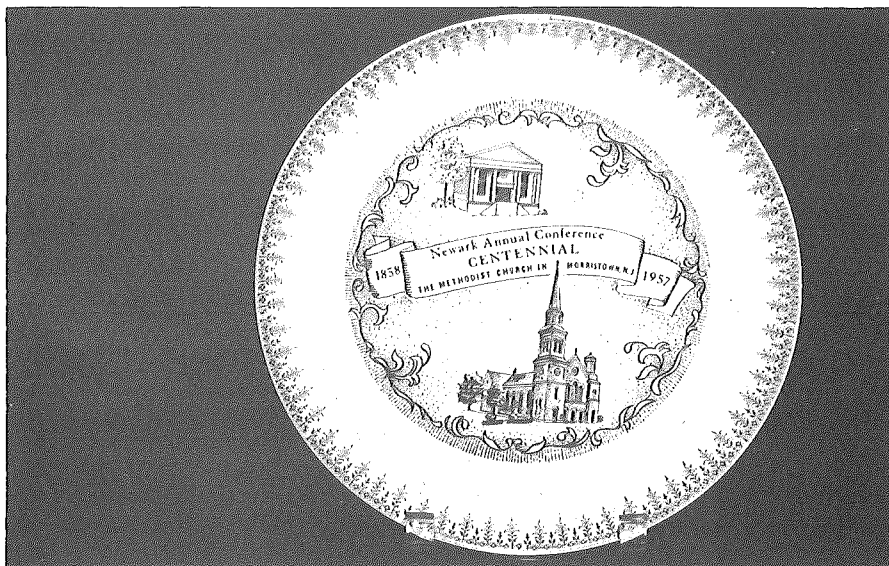
Prior to World War I, Oldwick was known as New Germantown. Bishop Asbury first visited the community in 1782, and the congregation dates from that time. This building replaced the original Oldwick church buildin, now located in Califon.

classes spread across this wide expanse. As the congregations grew and new ones were formed, the circuit was divided several times. By 1811, there was an East Jersey District of the Philadelphia Conference, and in 1837 the New Jersey Conference was created. Twenty years later, this conference had grown to such an extent that the decision was made to divide the state in half, and the Newark Annual Conference, now the Northern New Jersey Conference, was born. The first session of the Newark Conference was held in 1858 at the church in Morristown, located in the historic community where General Washington and his troops spent three winters of the Revolutionary War.



The Morristown Church building, a conference historic site, was destroyed by fire in 1972 and completely rebuilt using the original stone walls.

Throughout the years, Northern New Jersey Methodism has produced many outstanding leaders for the church and community. Among early Methodists, the most well known member of the Newark conference was Henry Boehm, travelling companion of Bishop Asbury. Boehm, who retired on Staten Island, was a member of the conference until his death in 1875 at the age of 100. Other notable early Methodists in Northern New Jersey include Thomas Morrell, an American officer in the Revolutionary War

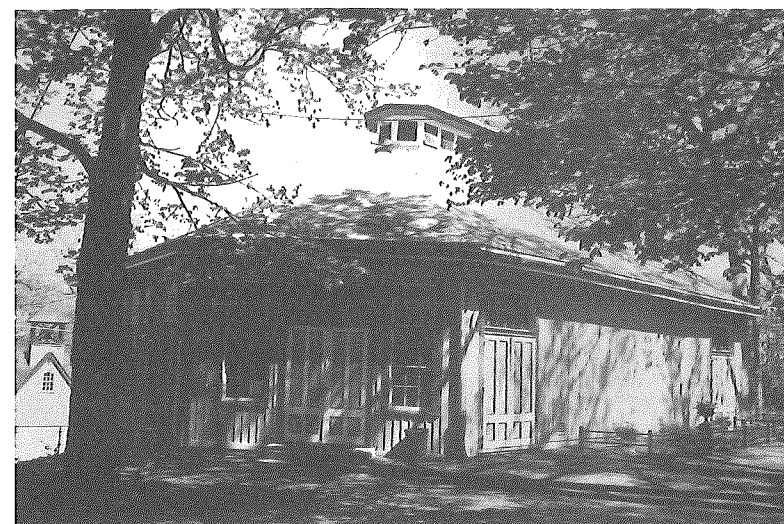


The centennial session of the Northern New Jersey Conference, like the first, was held in Morristown. (Church plate in the Northern New Jersey Conference Collection at Drew University.)

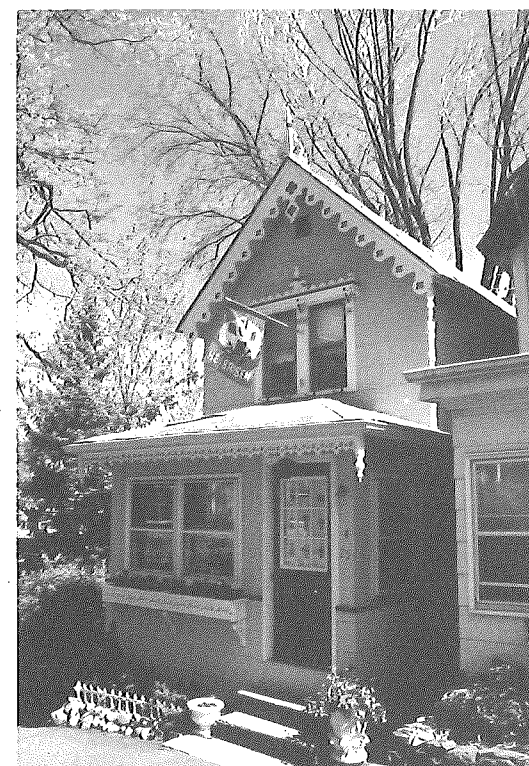
who became a Methodist circuit rider, and Civil War chaplain John Lenhart, who was the first U. S. Navy chaplain to be killed in action.

Methodism in Northern New Jersey continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century. The Methodist system of circuit riders encouraged pastors to establish new Sunday schools and congregations in communities which neighbored those to which they were assigned. During this time, the original church buildings of older congregations were replaced with larger and more permanent structures. The oldest church building still in use in the conference was built in 1824 in Oldwick. In 1867, the building having been replaced by a larger structure, it was dismantled and transported by wagon during the winter to the nearby village of Califon, where it was rebuilt. Today, greatly remodeled, it houses the kitchen wing of the church in Califon.

Camp meetings were a popular evangelical event in Northern New Jersey throughout the nineteenth century. The first Methodist camp meeting in Northern New Jersey was held in Parsippany in 1806. Others were held in Bayonne, Belvidere, Haverstraw (New York State), Midland Park, Nutley, Paterson, Rahway, Union Village, Vernon, Verona, and Whippany. In 1866, the first Conference Camp Meeting was held at Speedwell Lake in Morristown, and two years later Mount Tabor in Morris County was established as the official Conference Camp Meeting ground. While Mount Tabor has since become a secular suburb, a community festival is still held each summer on the camp grounds and in the tabernacle.



The Mount Tabor tabernacle, site of camp meeting in Northern New Jersey.



The tabernacle grounds are surrounded by lovely Victorian homes.

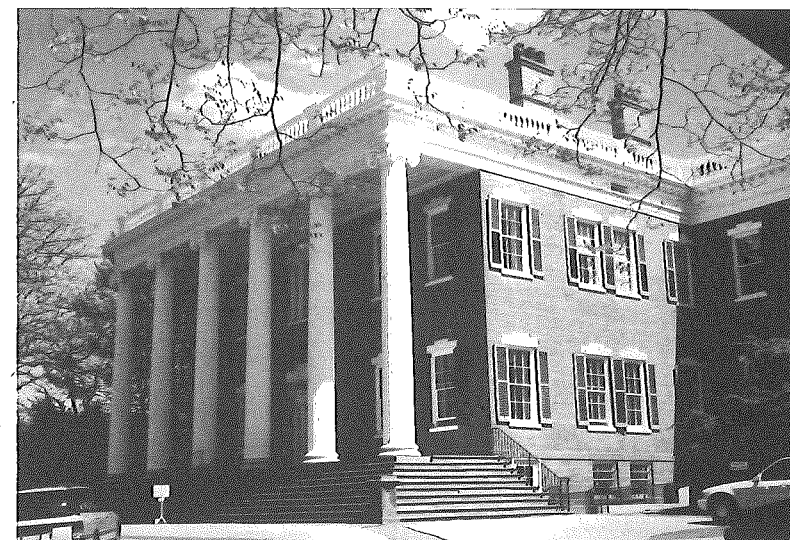
As Methodism grew and flourished in Northern New Jersey during the nineteenth century, church leaders began to work toward the establishment of other Methodist related institutions. Two schools were established in 1867 to celebrate the centennial of Methodism in America. Centenary Collegiate Institute was established in Hackettstown as a four year women's college. Subsequently, it became a private girl's high school and then a junior college for women. Today it is a co-educational college granting associate and bachelors degrees, with a national reputation in business, fashion design, and equestrian studies.



The Edward W. Seay Administration building at Centenary College in Hackettstown, site of several recent Annual Conference sessions.

Drew Theological Seminary, named for financier Daniel Drew, was established the same year as one of the first Methodist seminaries to prepare candidates for ordained ministry. It is located on the grounds of the Gibbons Mansion, now known as Mead Hall, which was built in 1832. Through the years, many bishops and other prominent leaders of Methodism have studied or taught at Drew. An undergraduate college was added in 1928 and a graduate school in 1956. Today Drew University, which has also become the home of the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, is one of America's leading small colleges. Drew's current president is the former New Jersey governor, Thomas Kean.

Among the prominent Northern New Jersey Methodist were three noted for their distinguished publications. The scholarship of James Strong, professor at Drew, produced *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, still used widely by scholars more than a hundred years after its publication. Steven Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*, was the son of a



Mead Hall, the administration building at Drew University, is the original Gibbons estate mansion built in 1832. Drew University, a conference historic site, was established as a Methodist theological seminary in 1867. Many conference clergy are alumni of the school and Drew has hosted many recent sessions of the annual conference.



The United Methodist Archives Center at Drew University is the headquarters for the commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. It contains the largest collection of Methodist books, periodicals, and memorabilia in the world.

Generations of clergy in Northern New Jersey have taken their ordination vows on Francis Asbury's Hebrew Bible, which was given to Drew University by Vernon Hampton in 1951. (The negative is the "A" sections; I'm not sure which number.)

Methodist pastor. Pastor and district superintendent, Jesse Hurlbut, wrote *The Story of the Bible*, a wildly popular book of Bible stories for children. Another well known Methodist was James Buckley, influential editor of *The Christian Advocate*. Four clergy who were or had been members of the conference were elected as bishop in the nineteenth century, James Fitzgerald, John F. Hurst, John Vincent, and Isaac Wiley.

As Northern New Jersey entered the twentieth century, the predominantly rural character of the state began to change. Urban areas devoted to manufacturing grew up, particularly in Essex, Hudson, Passaic, and Union Counties around the cities of Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, and Elizabeth. Methodists established new congregations in many urban neighborhoods, and sought to minister effectively within newly arrived immigrant communities. In the early twentieth century, the conference developed German speaking congregations in Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Paterson, Hoboken, Union City and Dumont. Italian ministries flourished in Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth and Cranford. Swedish language churches were established in Kearny, Newark and East Orange, and Norwegian-Danish churches were built in Jersey City and Perth Amboy. Through the years, as new immigrants have become assimilated into the American culture, these congregations have either dissolved, merged with other churches, or evolved into English speaking congregations. But new immigrants from other parts of the world continue to come to Northern New Jersey, and the conference currently has one Haitian, one Chinese, one Japanese, one Portuguese/Brazilian, two Philippino, eight Hispanic, and twenty Korean speaking congregations.



Halsey Street Church was the original Methodist congregation in Newark. (Paperweight in the Northern New Jersey Conference Collection at Drew University.)

America's long history of racial separatism has also had its effects upon our conference. St. John's United Methodist Church in Newark, an African-American congregation founded in 1872, spawned congregations in Orange, Paterson and Montclair within the first ten years of its life. Today, there are a dozen predominantly African American congregations across the conference, predominantly in urban areas.

Methodists have developed other specialized ministries to help meet the needs of people in the urban areas of the Northern New Jersey conference. The largest and most successful is certainly Goodwill Industries, which is a part of the national Goodwill organization founded at the turn of the century in Boston. Goodwill Industries of New Jersey was founded by Methodists in Jersey City in 1918. Today its ecumenical programs to employ the handicapped and disadvantaged are headquartered in Harrison, with stores located throughout the state. Other ongoing and successful urban ministries include CUMAC-ECHO, a large food and clothing pantry in Paterson; CAUSE, a similar program in Jersey City; and CAMP-YDP, which provides Paterson children with tutoring and recreational opportunities.

Methodists in Northern New Jersey have also sought to develop institutions to serve the needs of people throughout the conference. Ministries with children, youth and senior citizens have been notably extensive and effective. In cooperation with the Northern and Southern New Jersey Conferences, the United Methodist Homes of New Jersey provides senior citizen residential living centers throughout the state, including homes in



Branchville Manor was built in the 1960's, the first United Methodist Home for senior citizens in Northern New Jersey. A second now exists in East Orange, with others planned or under construction in Newton and Plainfield.

Branchville and East Orange. New facilities are currently being developed in Plainfield and Newton.

Organized youth ministry in Methodism can be traced to the development of "Epworth Leagues" (named for the childhood home of the Wesleys) in local churches beginning in the 1890s. The first Epworth League Institute in Methodism was held in Hackettstown in 1908. This summer conference evolved into a series of summer camps and conferences held at various camps and college campuses in the area. Then, in the late 1960s, the Northern New Jersey Conference built its own center in Swartswood for camps, conferences and retreats. This facility, Aldersgate Center, is used throughout the year for local church and conference events designed for all ages.



Wesley Lodge at Aldersgate Center, Northern New Jersey's facility for camps, conferences, and retreats.

Among prominent Northern New Jersey Methodists of the twentieth century are four closely involved in the ecumenical movement. Attorney Charles Parlin of Englewood and YMCA executive John R. Mott of Montclair helped to found the World Council of Churches, and Eugene Smith served as General Secretary of the W. C. C. in New York City. Mrs. H. W. Rosengrant was a leader in the American Bible Society, Church Women United and National Council of Churches. The clergy members of the conference who have been elected as bishop in the twentieth century include James Ault, Alexander Camphor, Yoitsu Honda, Hae Jong Kim, John Wesley Lord, Ernest Lyght, Charles L. Mead, Charles B. Mitchell, Henry Spellmeyer, Hazen G. Werner, and Lloyd C. Wicke.

Perhaps the most striking change in the Northern New Jersey Conference in recent years is the ethnic and gender composition of the clergy. Until the nineteen seventies, conference clergy were almost exclusively white and male. Today, the conference clergy include dozens of women and representatives of ethnic groups from throughout the world.

In the 1870's, the Passaic church was served briefly but successfully by a woman pastor, Anna Oliver. In 1924, Puera Robison, a teacher at Centenary, was one of the first women in the Methodist Episcopal Church to be ordained, and in 1956 Ruth Ellis was one of the first to be admitted to membership in the conference as a clergywoman. Many women have followed in their footsteps and two women, Betty Jane Young and Vicki Brendler, have served as district superintendents.

In 1872, John L. H. Sweres became the first African-American to become a clergy member of the conference. Others followed until 1892, when black churches and pastors were segregated into the separate Delaware Conference. In 1964, as the Delaware Conference was disbanded, Northern New Jersey welcomed not only several black churches and pastors, but also African-American Bishop Prince Taylor. Two black clergy have served as district superintendents, B. Milton Hargrove and Ernest Lyght, who was elected bishop in 1996. The same year, Bishop Alfred Johnson, who is also an African-American, was appointed to the New Jersey Area.

Drew University has a long and prosperous relationship with the Methodist Church in Korea. Henry Appenzellar, first Methodist missionary



The new Appenzellar Chapel at Aldersgate Center, built in 1998, honors the first Methodist Missionary to Korea, Henry Appenzellar. Methodist churches in Korea donated funds to build the chapel.

to Korea, studied at Drew and served as pastor of the church in Green Village. Through the subsequent decades, many Korean clergy have come to Drew to pursue their education. The first to become a member of the Northern New Jersey Conference was Hae Jong Kim in 1964, who was instrumental in developing Korean congregations throughout the conference. He served as pastor and district superintendent, and was elected bishop in 1992.

In the twentieth century, while some parts of the Northern New Jersey Conference became urbanized and Methodism often struggled to maintain city churches, other nearby villages and towns began to take on the suburban character which predominates over much of the conference today. With the dramatic increase in population between 1900 and 1960, Methodism in the suburbs grew and flourished, and most of the small Methodist chapels were replaced with larger buildings suited to expanded ministries. More recently, with changing demographic and cultural trends, most of our suburban congregations have experienced a significant loss in membership. Declining membership has led to talks of merging the Northern and Southern New Jersey Conferences, perhaps as early as the year 2001. Meanwhile, membership in local congregations has become increasingly diverse, and many of the growing congregations are composed of a predominantly ethnic minority or multi-ethnic membership.